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The relationship between independence in everyday activities and quality of life in spinal cord injured patients from different sub-cultures in Israel.

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Introduction:

Spinal cord injury (SCI) is one of the most severe causes of disability and handicap, often resulting in difficulties in performing everyday activities.

Two main assumptions underlie occupational therapists practice: A. Patients that are more independent in performing everyday activities have a better sense of autonomy and control of their life and environment. B. Patients with a better sense of autonomy have higher perception of quality of life (QOL). However, it is not clear enough whether these assumptions are correct for disabled people from different cultures. In Israel Jews and Arabs live side by side with close interaction between them. However, each of the two groups maintains its own culture, language and religion. While the Jews in Israel usually maintain a western-liberal lifestyle, the Arabs belong to a more conservative -traditional culture.

Objective:

To find out the relationship between independence in ADL and the perception of QOL in spinal cord injured patients Jews and Arabs in Israel.

Methods:

Twenty seven SCI patients were assessed in the last week before discharge from the rehabilitation department, 15 Jews and 12 Arabs. Age ranged between 20- 86. Independence in ADL was assessed with the Spinal Cord Independence Measure (SCIM). QOL was assessed with the WHOQOL - Bref.

Results:

Significant correlations were found between level of independence in ADL and QOL perception in the social domain, general QOL and QOL related to health ($p < .05$) in the entire sample. Jews with SCI had a better sense of general QOL compared to Arabs. A significant correlation was found between the level of independence in ADL and social QOL in the Jews subgroup, but not in the Arabs one. Correlation between accessibility to and out of the house and QOL was found in both subgroups.

Conclusions:

Higher level of functional ability contributes to a better QOL perception among SCI patients shortly before discharge from rehabilitation. The differences between Jews and Arabs in the contribution of level of independence to QOL was not proved.

The correlation found between accessibility at home and QOL perception has clinical implications for occupational therapists.